

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intro

The word Epiphany comes from the Greek meaning “manifestation” or “showing forth.”

Thus the whole Season of Epiphany revolves around themes of how Jesus is manifested or made known to the world.

Last week, we celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany with the Wise Men, otherwise known as



“The Feast of the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.”

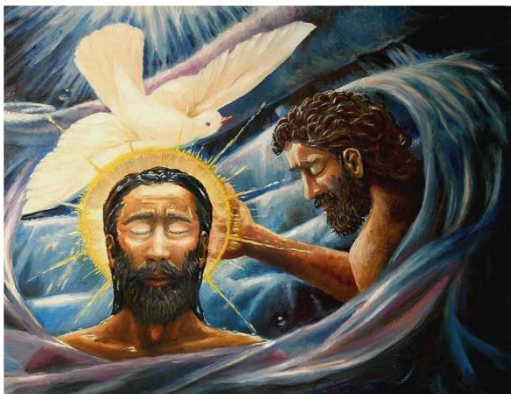


Arise, shine; for your
light has come ...

Isaiah 60:1, NRSV

And this week we have another manifestation or making known as we hear Luke's version of the story of Jesus' Baptism.

I. Jesus' Baptism



"Baptism of Christ" (2005), Dave Zelenka,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baptism-of-Christ.jpg>

A. All three of the Synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – begin Jesus' public ministry with his Baptism.

1. And they each have their own slant on what it means.

2. Luke is not so interested in the

baptism itself, as he is in **what happened afterward.**

3. Luke tells us "... when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.

- "And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'"

4. Now, that's some making known!

B. Here, Luke gives us not just one but **THREE** manifestations of who Jesus is.

1. First, we have the heavens opening as a sign of the Divine action to follow.

2. Then, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus "in bodily form like a dove" – thus empowering Jesus for his ministry.

3. And finally, there is the voice from heaven, which declares, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

4. Thus, Jesus is proclaimed by the Voice and **EMPOWERED** for his ministry by God's creative and prophetic Spirit.

5. Another way of looking at this scene is that here we have a visual tableau of the Holy Trinity before us:

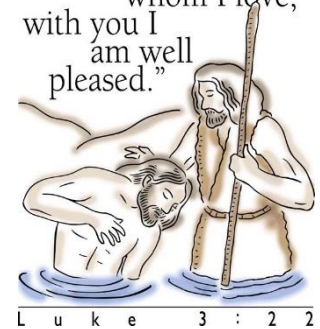
- God the Father revealed in the **VOICE**
- God the Son revealed in the **PERSON** of Jesus
- God the Holy Spirit revealed in the **DOVE**

C. For Luke, Jesus' Baptism is a **THEOPHANY** – the revealing of God.

1. Through his Baptism, Jesus is revealed as *God's Beloved Son* who was empowered by the Holy Spirit and commissioned to fulfill the vocation of the Messiah.

And a voice came from heaven:

"You are my Son,
whom I love;
with you I
am well
pleased."



2. And we will see Jesus live out this vocation the rest of Epiphany – as he is repeatedly made known in his words and actions.

3. And, through **our own** Baptism we too receive this same GRACE and EMPOWERMENT to follow our call to God's service.

II. Our Baptism

A. Baptism IS the Sacrament by which WE are **adopted** as God's children and made members of Christ's Body, the Church.

1. IN Baptism we die with Christ that we may be raised with him

2. THROUGH Baptism we receive forgiveness of our sins and new life in the Holy Spirit.

3. BY Baptism we become NEW people – the people of God.

4. When we are Baptized we state our beliefs – belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5. And we promise that we will live our lives as followers of Christ and participate in the life of the Church.

6. That's why ALL Baptized members may come for Communion – no matter their age – so that each of us may be EMPOWERED to live out these promises we make.

B. One of the things we promise in the Baptismal Covenant is that we will “continue in the Apostles teaching and fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.”

1. To do this, we must be regular participants in Prayer and Worship

2. A mother went to wake her son for church one Sunday morning. When she knocked on his door, he said, “I'm not going!”

“Why not?” asked his mother.

“I’ll give you two good reasons,” he said. “One, they don’t like me. Two, I don’t like them.”

His mother replied, “I’ll give you two good reasons why YOU WILL go to church. One, you’re 47 years old. Two, you’re the pastor!”

3. We need to be Regular in our participation

Regular – not when it’s convenient, not when we feel like it, not when we can work church into our schedule – but **regular**.

4. And if we can’t come in person – attend via the **livestream**, it may not have the *in person* touches, but it is still a way to connect with God.

C. We also promise that we will “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.”

1. What does it mean to YOU to be Christ’s representative on earth?

- Hey, that’s not me – that the Pope – NO it is EACH of us.

2. We are called to REPRESENT Christ to all we meet and work with.

3. We are to seek and serve Christ in ALL persons **loving** our neighbor as ourselves.

- LOVING them – not just tolerating them, but seeing the Christ in every person and making an effort to reach out to them in true concern for their well-being.

4. This is hard work – that’s true – Baptism is not for the faint of heart.

5. And Baptism is not a one-time thing – but a LIFE LONG, ongoing event.

6. And that’s why we need to come together each week for mutual support that we may be strengthened to do this throughout the rest of the week.

D. The story is told of a mother who put a lot of domestic chores on hold while she and her husband tended to their children and commuted to work.

1. One day, her six-year-old – who seemed more than a little surprised – watched her stripping the bed linens before washing them.

2. Finally, he asked her, “Gee, Mom, will we have to do this every year?”

3. AT LEAST!

- And the same is true of our Baptismal Covenant – we need to visit it from time to time to remind us of these PROMISES and to launder our own dirty linen.

4. So in just a few minutes, we will once again renew OUR Baptismal vows

- to further connect us with the Baptism of Our Lord
- and to support us in carrying them out in our lives.

5. And as we renew our Covenant, ask yourself, “How and I doing on this one?”

- Are you doing OK?
- Or could you be doing a better job?

III. Living our Baptism

A. Each year, on the First Sunday after Epiphany, we celebrate Jesus’ Baptism.

1. In this season of making Jesus known, we start with his Baptism, as the VOICE from heaven makes Jesus known as God’s Beloved Son.

2. It is at His Baptism that Jesus’ ministry is launched – and the same is true for each of us.

3. By OUR Baptism we become **Epiphanies** as we MANIFEST Christ – making him known in OUR lives.

4. But how do we do all that?

B. Perhaps these words, by the African-American Preacher and Pastor, *Howard Thurman* will give us a place to start.

1. I carry this poem with me all the time in my calendar, and I hope you will carry them in your heart.

2. *When the song of Angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the Kings and Princes are home,
When the Shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To feed the hungry,
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
 To bring peace among people.*

Let Us Pray

Father in heaven, who at the Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed Him your Beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into His name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess Him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. AMEN. (BCP p. 214)